

Moirashire

ENRICHING LIFE ON THE MURRAY

Recreational Vehicle (RV) Friendly Strategy

**Adopted by Council
26 April 2016**



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1 Executive Summary

Moirashire Council wants to be a Recreational Vehicle (RV) Friendly Shire and seeks to proactively encourage greater visitation and economic impact from this niche tourism market.

Tourism is an important contributor to the local economy in Moirashire Council with around 900,000 visitors coming to the region annually. The tourism industry makes a considerable contribution by bringing new dollars into the region that directly spent on a wide range of services from accommodation, restaurants and attractions to the retail sector.

The traditional caravan and camping market represent an important component of the tourism mix in Moirashire with caravan parks and commercial camping grounds being the second most popular type of accommodation for domestic overnight visitors. In total, there are 22 caravan parks registered in Moirashire offering a total of 1,010 cabins and 1,450 powered/unpowered sites.

A new market has developed; the self-contained RV market that covers visitors travelling with caravans, campervans and/or motorhomes, but does not necessarily require the facilities of commercial caravan parks and camping grounds. This market requires only access to potable water, dump points and a place to stop and camp overnight legally.

Research has shown that the self-contained RV market has the potential to generate economic activity with an average weekly spend of \$500 and an average of 163 days of travel annually. Some RVers will only stay in commercial caravan parks, other RVers will never stay in commercial caravan parks and some RVers will stay in a mixture of commercial and non-commercial caravan parks and camping grounds.

The self-contained RV market represents a growing but lower yielding market that should be considered in Moirashire's tourism offering, but should not detract from the traditional caravan and camping market.

In 2007 The RV Friendly schemes (i.e. RV Friendly Destination and RV Friendly Town) was established by the Caravan Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) with the purpose of assisting regional areas to attract RV tourists and provide a network of RV friendly sites throughout Australia. Specific criteria apply to each of these schemes.

Moirashire Council currently has four RV Friendly Towns (i.e. Yarrawonga, Cobram, Nurmukah and Nathalia), but is looking to take a shire-wide approach to being RV Friendly.

There are a number of issues relating to the provision of free dump points and low cost or free camping that must be considered, including management and maintenance of dump points, enforcement and policing, cost of water/power, noise, risks and insurance, application and adherence to regulatory requirements.



Taking into the consideration the range of challenges and issues, Moira Shire Council's vision is to become an RV Friendly Shire.

To achieve the vision of becoming an RV Friendly Shire, Moira Shire Council will have to implement the following actions:

- ❖ Endorse and Promote Moira Shire as an Attractive RV Friendly Shire
- ❖ Establish Economic Data and Visitor Profile of RV Market
- ❖ Transition to Commercially Managed Dump Points
- ❖ Trial the continuation of Council managed dump points
- ❖ Develop RV Friendly Low Cost Overnight Sites in smaller towns and surrounds
- ❖ Commit resources to enforcement
- ❖ Encourage local businesses to become CMCA RV Friendly Destinations
- ❖ Provide long-vehicle parking close to shopping precincts
- ❖ Offer access to potable water from designated locations
- ❖ Provide new signage

2 Industry Overview

2.1 Importance of Tourism

Tourism is an important contributor to the local economy in Moira Shire Council. The tourism industry makes a considerable contribution by bringing new dollars into the region that are directly spent on a wide range of services from accommodation, restaurants and attractions to the retail sector. Then there are the indirect and flow-on effects from tourism in Moira Shire.

The tourism sector in Moira Shire currently contributes:

- ❖ \$95.504 million (3.7 %) of total output
- ❖ 580 jobs (6.3 %) to total employment
- ❖ \$22.335 million (4.5 %) of total wages and salaries
- ❖ \$43.417 million (4.1 %) of total value-added

Source: These figures are derived from economic modelling by REMPLAN for July 2014 based on the following sources of data: 2012-13, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Tourism Satellite Account.

For the year ending March 2015, Sun Country on the Murray¹ received close to 900,000 visitors of which 525,000 were domestic overnight, 365,000 domestic day visitors and 5,200 were international visitors. Domestic visitors (day and overnight) spent an approximately \$320 million in the region. International visitor expenditure in the region is considered statistically unreliable for the year ending March 2015.

After 'friends or relatives property' (40.3%), 'caravan parks and commercial camping grounds' represent the second most popular type of accommodation for domestic overnight visitors, with 15.3 per cent of the overnight domestic visitors staying at this type of accommodation. The caravan and commercial camping grounds do not rank highly with international visitors.

Moira Shire Council seeks to strengthen Moira's tourism offer through the development of a destination management plan (DMP) and advocacy and support for the development of key tourism assets in the region.

2.2 Traditional Caravan and Camping Market versus the Self Contained RV Market

As highlighted in the above section, the typical caravan and camping market represent an important component of the tourism mix in Moira Shire. Nevertheless, an opportunity also exists to tap into the self-contained RV market.

¹ For the statistics reported, the Sun Country region includes Yarrawonga, Mulwala, Cobram, Barooga, Numurkah, Barmah, Nathalia, Tocumwal, Finley and Berrigan.

The traditional caravan and camping market covers visitors that travel with tents or vehicles such as caravans, campervans and motorhomes that can either be self-contained or not self-contained that stay in commercial caravan and camping grounds.

The self-contained RV market covers visitors that travel with caravans, campervans and/or motorhomes, but does not require the facilities of commercial caravan and camping grounds. This newer generation of RVers are seeking an experience that offers freedom of choice along with new options to satisfy their needs. In other words, the self-contained RVers are capable of being independent for up to a week and enjoy the freedom of stopping whenever and wherever they want. They require only access to potable water, dump points and a place to stop and camp overnight legally.

Nationally, the interests of businesses associated with the caravan and camping market is represented by the Caravan Industry Association of Australia (CIAA). The CIAA is the national peak body for the Australian caravan and camping industry representing over 4000 industry businesses ranging from caravan parks, manufacturers and retailers of industry products, suppliers of goods and services, and service providers.

In Victoria the traditional caravan and camping market is also represented by the Victorian Caravan Parks Association (often referred to as VicParks) and other relevant industry associations. The Victorian Caravan Parks Association was formed in 1964 to protect, promote and advance the caravan park industry. VicParks represents the interests of the commercial caravan and camping grounds.

In Victoria the self-contained RV market is also represented by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia. The Caravan Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) is the peak body for the RV market. It was established in 1986 and currently represents more than 65,000 members.

Being a relative new and growing market, research for the self-contained RV market is not yet covered through formal research channels, such as the traditional caravan market that is represented in our national and international visitor surveys conducted by Tourism Research Australia. However, research conducted by the CMCA indicates that the RV market has potential to generate economic activity with the average weekly spend of RV tourists when travelling is around \$500. This is generally spent on:

- ❖ Fuel \$210
- ❖ Expenses \$160
- ❖ Repairs/maintenance \$25
- ❖ Site fees \$51
- ❖ Other \$46

What is particularly important to note is that the RV tourists spends around 163 days travelling annually and on average spends three days at each stop that they make. The replenishment cycle of the RV tourist mean that generally RVers will stock up on day 1 (fully stocked vehicle), day 2 (need to stock up with fuel and basics), day 4 (need to stock up with more basics) and day 7 (full replenishment of groceries and vehicle needs).

Research conducted by CMCA of their 65,000+ members have also shown that of the RV market:

- ❖ 33% will only stay in a commercial caravan and camping grounds;
- ❖ 16% will only stay in RV friendly site (i.e. non-commercial sites only); and
- ❖ 51% will stay in a mixture of commercial and non-commercial caravan and camping grounds.

The following provide an overview of research considering the pros and cons of RV Friendly:

The 2013 Caravan Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) snapshot report highlights the growth and value of the RV market

- ❖ Around 500,000 RVs registered in Australia
- ❖ RV market is worth \$6.5 billion a year to the Australian economy
- ❖ The RV market spend on average expenditure of \$500-\$900 per week
- ❖ The RV market is a growing market due to baby boomers
- ❖ 34% of the RV market stay in caravan parks – only 16% of the RV market will only stay in non-commercial accommodation
- ❖ 50% use a mix of commercial and non-commercial accommodation.

The 2012 Caravan and Road Vehicle Accommodation (CRVA) snapshot report highlights the commercial and non-commercial camper spend patterns

- ❖ Commercial campers create \$5.4 billion of economic activity a year in Australia – with 90% of direct expenditure (\$2 billion) spent in regional areas.
- ❖ Commercial campers' average expenditure is \$576 per location (excl. accomm. cost) vs. \$213 non-commercial campers. The average daily spend for a commercial camper is around \$73 versus \$53 for a non-commercial camper.
- ❖ Commercial campers on average stay longer

The RV market represents a growing tourism market that should be considered in Moira Shire's tourism offering, but should not detract from the traditional caravan and camping market.

3 CMCA RV Friendly Schemes

The RV Friendly schemes were launched by the CMCA in 2007. The purpose of the RV Friendly Schemes was to assist regional areas to attract RV tourists and provide a network of RV friendly sites throughout Australia as a service to their club members.

The RV Friendly Schemes identify common criteria that are appealing to the RV market and which will help encourage short stays within the communities or destinations that enter into the scheme.

There are two schemes:

1. RV Friendly Destinations
2. RV Friendly Towns

An RV Friendly Shire scheme has not yet been identified. We have discussed this with CMCA and they are welcoming Moira Shire Council to take an RV Friendly Shire approach where Council can promote to RVers that we welcome them to the shire and identify the relevant RV facilities. Macedon Ranges is one example of a local council that has recently taken an RV Friendly Shire approach to being RV Friendly.

The criteria for each of the existing schemes have been outlined below.

3.1 RV Friendly Destinations™

An RV Friendly Destination™ is often a small town, club, oval, showground, scenic attraction or business that is not able to meet the full criteria of the CMCA RV Friendly Town™ program. Councils, progress associations and businesses can apply to participate by completing an application form, which is available from the CMCA National Headquarters.

3.1.1 Essential criteria:

- ❖ Provision of short term, low cost overnight parking (24/48 hours) for self-contained RVs.
- ❖ The parking area needs to be on a solid, level surface.
- ❖ There must be enough room for large vehicles to manoeuvre.

3.1.2 Desirable criteria:

- ❖ A waste water dump point.
- ❖ Potable water.
- ❖ Longer term parking.

CMCA will offer RV Friendly Destinations™ specified signage at cost price plus promotion of the destination on the Club website (subject to terms and conditions).

In Moira Shire, the following RV Friendly Destinations are:

- ❖ Wakiti Creek Resort; and
- ❖ The Big Strawberry

With the appropriate Council permits in place, other businesses could be encouraged to enquire about joining this RV Friendly Destination™ scheme.

3.2 RV Friendly Towns™

An RV Friendly Town™ is a town that has met a set of guidelines to ensure they provide a certain amount of amenities, and a certain level of services for these travellers. When RV tourists enter a

town displaying the RV Friendly Town sign, they know they will be welcome, certain services will be provided for them that may not be available in other centres, and they will have access to a safe place to stay overnight, and possibly for a longer period.

3.2.1 Essential criteria:

- ❖ Provision of appropriate parking within the town centre, with access to a general shopping area for groceries and fresh produce.
- ❖ Provision of short term, low cost overnight parking (24/48 hours) for self-contained RVs, as close as possible to the CBD.
- ❖ Access to potable water.
- ❖ Access to a free dump point at an appropriate location.

3.2.2 Desirable criteria:

- ❖ Provision of long term parking for self-contained RVs.
- ❖ Access to medical facilities or an appropriate emergency service.
- ❖ Access to a pharmacy or a procedure to obtain pharmaceutical products.
- ❖ Visitor Information Centre (VIC) with appropriate parking facilities.
- ❖ VIC to provide a town map showing essential facilities, such as short and long term parking areas, dump point and potable water.
- ❖ RV Friendly Town™ signs to be erected within the town precinct.

The CMCA provides the participating Council with two signs advertising the RV Friendly Town™ and promotion of the town on the Club website (subject to terms and conditions). The CMCA signs are not compliant with VicRoads standard signage.

Moira Shire Council currently has four RV Friendly Towns™ including Yarrawonga, Cobram, Numurkah and Nathalia.

3.3 Leave No Trace®

The CMCA recognised that one of the great advantages of travelling in a self-contained vehicle is having the luxury to be able to stop at remote and regional locations, with no facilities, and become immersed in the tranquillity.

The CMCA wants to secure the opportunity for freedom camping and have established a code of conduct for their members titled the Leave No Trace® Program, which was introduced in 1994.

The program demonstrates to all levels of governments that self-contained vehicles do not necessarily have a negative impact on the environment, even if the campsite does not have any facilities. Under the Leave No Trace program, RV users adhere to strict guidelines relating to the vehicle's capacity for holding fresh, grey and black water allowing Councils to give access to controlled areas for RV self-contained users.

4 Situation Analysis

4.1 Tourism Destinations in the Murray Considering RV Friendly Option

Moira Shire Council is not the only council in the Murray Region and Victoria to consider the RV Friendly tourism options. Many towns in the Murray Region are considering or have become RV Friendly Towns under the guidelines set out by the CMCA.

Considering the issues that it creates for commercial caravan parks, The Murray Regional Tourism Board (MRTB) indicates in their Destination Management Plan that a strategic approach to RV Friendly Towns and the provision of RV infrastructure is required.

The MRTB recommends that

only towns without caravan parks and existing visitor demand should consider becoming RV friendly: other locations should consider providing RV facilities on a commercial basis, typically within existing caravan parks (MRTB DMP, p. 39).

It is recommended that this regional tourism strategy is considered in the development of Moira Shire's RV Friendly Strategy and implementation of such.

4.2 Moira Shire's Existing Caravan and Road Vehicle Accommodation Capacity

Moira Shire is rather unique in terms of its existing caravan and road vehicle accommodation capacity. Many councils in Victoria do not have the same existing capacity that Moira Shire Council does.

In Moira Shire there are currently 22 operational caravan parks on offer across the towns of Barmah, Bathumi, Bundalong, Cobram, Kanyapella, Katamatite, Koonoomoo, Kotupna, Nathalia, Numurkah, Strathmerton and Yarrawonga. Of these 22 caravan parks, four (4) are council owned but managed through a Committee of Management. We have no community parks in Moira Shire.

Across these 22 caravan parks, there are a total of 1,010 cabins and 1,450 powered/unpowered sites. The sites vary in size and further investigation is necessary to identify the capacity to cater for large scale RVs.

Prices in the commercial caravan parks although varying are approximately between \$30-\$35 per night, increasing up to \$50 during holiday periods; cheaper for non-powered and chain member discounts. Member discounts are usually a percentage with a maximum discount of \$40.00

The 22 caravan parks that are registered with Moira Shire Council include:

- ❖ Apex Caravan Park
- ❖ Barmah Camping Pty Ltd Caravan Park

- ❖ Bundalong Holiday Park
- ❖ Coach Stop Caravan Park
- ❖ Cobram East Caravan Park
- ❖ Cobram Oasis Tourist Park
- ❖ Cobram Willows Caravan Park
- ❖ Green Palms Caravan Park
- ❖ Jelara Caravan Park
- ❖ Katamatite Caravan Park
- ❖ Murray Perch Caravan Park
- ❖ Murray River Hideaway Holiday Park
- ❖ Nathalia Motel & Holiday Park
- ❖ Numurkah Caravan Park
- ❖ RACV Cobram Resort
- ❖ River Bend Caravan Park
- ❖ Riverbank Caravan Park
- ❖ Time Out Holiday Resort
- ❖ Wakiti Creek Resort
- ❖ Yarrawonga Holiday Park
- ❖ Yarrawonga Westside Caravan Park
- ❖ Skiland Motel Pty. Ltd.

There is also a wide range of vehicle dispersed camping opportunities in the parks and forests of our shire. These sites are too many to list. Areas where such dispersed camping options can be found include but is not limited to:

- ❖ Barmah National Park;
- ❖ The Murray River Reserve;
- ❖ Cobram Regional Park;
- ❖ Yarrawonga Regional Park; and
- ❖ Warby-Ovens National Park.

4.2.1 Current Unauthorised Sites

There are areas within Moira Shire Council that currently has camping occurring on an ad hoc basis, which Council's Local Laws Officers from time to time receive complaints about. Some sites include:

- ❖ Thompsons Beach, Kennedy Park Cobram
- ❖ Showgrounds, Cobram
- ❖ Showgrounds, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Showgrounds, Numurkah
- ❖ Lions Park, Numurkah
- ❖ Murray Valley Highway, Strathmerton

- ❖ West Rest Area, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Rest Area, Bundalong
- ❖ Truck Stop, Wunghnu

Increasing the awareness of RV Friendly sites and facilities will assist to limit the inappropriate usage of unauthorised sites and lessen the burden on our Local Laws Officers.

A clearer promotion of where the RV Friendly facilities and sites are will direct RVers to the appropriate sites and may offer opportunities for promotion of commercial caravan and camping grounds within the shire.

4.2.2 Current Authorised Sites

There are currently no Authorised Sites.

4.3 Dump Points

A dump point is a properly designed facility allowing RVers to dispose of grey and black water, as well as sewage waste. Dump points need to be installed as low to the ground as possible to allow discharge from a vehicle by gravity. Dump points are usually connected either directly to the sewage system or to a septic tank. Dump points also need to be placed in a position that allows access to large vehicles up to 19.5 metres in length.

The purpose of providing easily-accessible dump points is to encourage more self-contained tourism throughout Australia, benefiting both regional and rural centres, and the environment.

4.3.1 Dump Point Locations in Moira Shire

Over 300 public dump points have been installed throughout Australia under the dump point subsidy scheme organised by the CMCA.

In Moira Shire, there are five dump points managed by Council and a range of dump points located within caravan parks. The following provide a list of dump points in Moira Shire:

- ❖ Showgrounds, Numurkah
- ❖ Showgrounds, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Showgrounds, Cobram
- ❖ Murray Valley Highway, Strathmerton
- ❖ Weir St, Nathalia

The following commercial dump points also exist in Moira Shire:

- ❖ Yarrawonga Holiday Park, Yarrawonga x 2 - For guests only
- ❖ Bundalong Holiday Resort, Bundalong - For guests only
- ❖ Murray River Hideaway, Strathmerton (septic tank)
- ❖ Nathalia Motel & Holiday Park, Nathalia - For guests only

- ❖ Oasis, Cobram – \$5 dollar user charge
- ❖ RACV, Cobram – For guests only
- ❖ River Bank, Nathalia – For guests only
- ❖ Time Out Holiday Park, Koonoomoo (currently installing) – would allow user charge
- ❖ Wakiti Creek, Kotupna – would allow user charge

The following caravan parks would allow usage by RVers either for free or at a charge if they had a dump point installed:

- ❖ Barmah
- ❖ Numurkah Caravan Park, Numurkah
- ❖ Cobram East Caravan Park, Cobram
- ❖ Willows, Cobram
- ❖ Westside Creek, Yarrawonga– need more information to confirm if they would allow usage

The Westside Petrol Station in Strathmerton has also expressed an interest in allowing usage by RVers either for free or at a charge if they had a dump point installed. The Westside Petrol Station is open 24 hours, seven days a week.

4.3.2 Dump Point Installation Costs

Under the RV Friendly scheme, CMCA/KEA Campers provide selected councils with a dump point for installation at a suitable public site, such as a community facility or rest area. The subsidised dump point must be provided free of charge as a public facility and be available for use, at the minimum, during normal daylight hours. Subsidised dump points will display a small stainless steel plaque (supplied by CMCA) acknowledging the contribution of CMCA and KEA Campers.

Although CMCA under their RV Friendly Town Scheme can provide the actual dump point free of charge, the installation of the dump point can be costly. All dump points need to be connected to the local sewerage system and depending on the location can cost up to \$15,000 to install.

4.4 Long Vehicle Parking (day time)

One of the essential criteria of the RV Friendly Town scheme is to provide appropriate parking within the town centre, with access to a general shopping area for groceries and fresh produce.

Long vehicle parking bays are significantly longer than regular vehicle bays and allow for parking of caravans, motorhomes, boats and longer vehicles that can be otherwise difficult to accommodate.

The provision of long vehicle parking options within the major towns as well as smaller towns is crucial to ensure that the economic impact of RV tourism is felt locally.

Long vehicle parking options can either be line-marked designated long-vehicle parking or un-marked off the side of the street parking.

4.4.1 Long Vehicle Parking in Major Towns

Long vehicle parking is available un-marked or line-marked in the following locations within the four major towns of Yarrawonga, Cobram, Numurkah and Nathalia:

- ❖ Punt Road , Cobram
- ❖ Behind Federation Park, Cobram Railway Station, Cobram
- ❖ Mivo Park, Cobram
- ❖ Blake St, Nathalia
- ❖ Weir Street, Nathalia
- ❖ Irvine Parade, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Hunt Street, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Hume Street, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Hovell Street, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Gilmore Street, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Melville Street Numurkah
- ❖ Knox Street, Numurkah

There may be further options for long vehicle parking that could be explored further, including but not limited to:

- Railway land at the end of Lott Street, Yarrawonga – this land is owned by VicTrack and not Council. In other words, this would either require VicTrack’s direct consent or the Committee of Management could apply for an extension of their lease of land near the Railway Station to allow Council to promote this location for parking.

4.4.2 Long Vehicle Parking in Smaller Towns

Long vehicle parking is available un-marked in the following locations:

- ❖ Lions Park, Tungamah
- ❖ Barr Street, Tungamah
- ❖ Swamp Road, Lake Rowan
- ❖ Hotchin Street, Katamatite
- ❖ Off Murray Valley Highway near Goughs Lane, Bundalong
- ❖ Off Murray Valley Highway, Strathmerton
- ❖ Wunghnu, by the creek
- ❖ Moran Street, Picola

4.5 Potable Water

Access to potable water in Moira Shire will be from the following locations:

- ❖ Cnr Barr Street and Tungamah Main Road, Tungamah
- ❖ Cnr Benalla - Tocumwal Road and Moore St, Katamatite

- ❖ Benalla-Tocumwal Road, Katamatite
- ❖ Blake Street, Nathalia
- ❖ Weir Street, Nathalia

Access to potable water may also potentially be provided from the same location as the commercial dump points. This will depend on the level of interest from the caravan parks to be part of such a packaged deal (i.e. dump your waste and fill up with potable water) at a minimal set fee.

5 RV Friendly Policies and Strategies for Other Councils

RV Friendly policies and strategies vary between shires in Victoria depending on the features and needs of the differing regions.

5.1 Murray Region

The following provide just a snapshot of the RV Friendly policies and strategies of other councils within the Murray Region (tourism region):

Albury City Council

Albury City is RV Friendly but the shire does not have a specific RV Strategy. Albury City Council promotes one free dump site located within their Railway Precinct and one designated free camping site within the shire.

Gannawarra Shire Council

Gannawarra Shire has three RV Friendly towns (i.e. Leitchville, Cohuna and Murrabit) and another two towns in the process of becoming RV Friendly (i.e. Kerang and Quambatook). Gannawarra Shire Council does not have a specific RV Strategy, but will be developing an RV Friendly Policy in the near future. Four free dump points are provided to RVs visiting the Gannawarra Shire. Gannawarra Shire Council is also planning to provide five short stay camping areas and already has an extensive range of longer term camping sites in the parks and forests managed by either Parks Victoria or the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

Campaspe Shire Council

Campaspe Shire has two official CMCA RV Friendly Towns (i.e. Kyabram and Lockington). The Campaspe Shire offers six dump points to RVers. Four dump points are free. Two dump points are located within Caravan Parks and are free to guests and \$5 and \$15 to non-guests. In terms of designated camping sites, Campaspe Shire offers one council operated free camping site with a stay limit of 28 days, two on Parks Victoria and GV Water sites and four in townships where camping fees are by way of a donation, plus innumerable other free-camping sites along the Murray River.

Corowa Shire Council

Corowa Shire is not RV Friendly under the CMCA scheme, but the shire does offer free dump points in all three towns (i.e. Corowa, Howlong and Mulwala). There are also a number of reserves where RVers can camp overnight at no cost (e.g. Kyffins Reserve, Wagon Wheel and Lions Park).

Berrigan Shire Council

Each of the towns in Berrigan Shire now has a dump point accessible to all, including: Barooga, Berrigan, Finley and Tocumwal.

Deniliquin

Deniliquin Shire is RV Friendly, but does not have a specific RV strategy. Deniliquin Council promotes its RV Friendly town (i.e. Deniliquin) with one free dump point and two free camping areas with a maximum stay of 48 hours.

Swan Hill Rural City Council

There are two RV Friendly Towns (i.e. Nyah and Robinvale) within the boundaries of Swan Hill Rural City Council. The Council also offers three free dump points and one designated free camping site at the Nyah Recreation Reserve.

Wakool Shire Council

The Wakool Shire may consider becoming an RV Friendly Shire and developing a specific strategy, as part of their process of reviewing all tourism strategies. There currently is one RV Friendly Town (i.e. Moulamein). There are three dump points available across the Wakool Shire - one in Barham that is free for guests and with a fee for use of dump point only and two dump points in Moulamein that are both free. Multiple designated free camping sites are available from Campbell's Island and Koondrook State Forest.

Wentworth Shire Council

The Wentworth Shire is not RV friendly nor is any of its towns under the CMCA scheme. Wentworth Shire, however, does offer the following facilities for RVers visiting: a free dump point at the Wentworth Caravan Park; and two 48 hour free camping sites.

5.2 Other Rural Victorian Councils

The following provide just a snapshot of the RV Friendly policies and strategies of other rural Victorian Councils:

Bass Coast Shire Council

No RV strategy, but a number of dump points are located in commercial caravan parks.

Baw Baw Shire Council

No RV strategy – the RV market is however recognised in their draft strategy.

Glenelg Shire Council

Provides free camping sites.

East Gippsland Shire Council

East Gippsland Shire Council promotes four designated free rest areas and eight dump points.

LaTrobe City Council

LaTrobe City Council does not have an RV Strategy and does not offer any public dump points or overnight parking facilities to cater for the RV market.

Macedon Ranges

The Macedon Ranges has one RV Friendly Town (i.e. Kyneton) with overnight parking of up to 48 hours at the Kyneton Mineral Springs Reserve. A dump point is also made available at this location. RV parking is available in five towns (Kyneton, Woodend, Gisborne, Romsey and Lancefield).

Moyne Shire Council

No free camping within the shire – Council owned caravan parks provide free dump points.

Wellington Shire Council

Wellington Shire Council has five RV Friendly towns and locations, 11 dump points and promotes more than 50 free or low cost camping and short term overnight parking.

Shepparton City Council

Shepparton City Council is not RV Friendly under the CMCA scheme and does not offer any designated free camping sites. They do however offer one free public access dump point, three dump points can be accessed at a fee within caravan parks and one dump point is offered for free within a business (car dealership). Shepparton City Council currently has established a working group to look into the topic of RV Friendly further.

Wangaratta City Council

Wangaratta not RV Friendly under the CMCA scheme, but does offer seven designated free camping sites, a free dump point at Oxley Reserve and access to a dump point at a caravan park in Wangaratta (i.e. Painters Island Caravan Park) at a small fee (\$5).

Benalla Rural City Council

Benalla is not yet officially recognised by the CMCA, but has been working with the CMCA to achieve this. Although Benalla does not have a specific RV strategy, there is one free public dump point and five designated free camping sites within the shire.

Indigo Shire

Indigo Shire is keen to demonstrate to the RV community that its towns embrace RVers and acknowledge their valuable contribution to regional economies whilst recognising that not all towns will be able to meet the CMCA RV Friendly Town/Destination criteria. Indigo Shire Council has

developed an internal RV policy that clearly states Council's policy on RV tourism. The policy outlines that RV facilities within major towns will exclude overnight parking and that dump points are provided within commercial caravan parks to RVers at a fee (token amount/\$5).

6 Challenges and Issues

Regardless of the RV market contributing to the local economy, there are a number of issues relating to the provision of free dump points and low cost or free camping that must be taken into consideration:

6.1 Dump Points

The current location of three of the current council managed dump points in showgrounds is not ideal, particularly when users wish to use the dump points during sporting and other events.

As the dump points are connected to the sewage system, Council is required to sign a Waste Trade Service agreement with the local water board at a cost of \$300 per year per dump point. This is due to the fact that the chemicals used in the black water holding tanks of RVs impede the natural processes of decomposition by either killing or retarding beneficial bacterial growth or may result in blockages of the discharge pipeline.

Under the Waste Trade Service agreement Council must ensure that the dump points are:

- ❖ Locked when not in use;
- ❖ Supervised at all times when used - This is to ensure that the dump points are not misused and that the wrong waste is not dumped into the sewage system; and
- ❖ Record vehicle registration numbers and time/date of use.

All dump points are in locations that are not easily supervised. Finally, there is also the cost of ongoing maintenance of these dump points.

6.2 Short-Term Parking Locations

To be an RV Friendly Town under the CMCA scheme, there must be short term (e.g. 15min – 8 hours) parking within the vicinity of the town. These need to be long enough to fit RV vehicles and brings with it the challenge of policing to ensure that the given time limits are adhered to.

6.3 Low Cost Overnight Parking:

The low cost overnight parking (e.g. 48 hours) bring with it the following challenges and issues:

- 1) Enforcement - ensuring that RVers only stay for the permitted period of time;
- 2) Waste – dump points, contamination of dump points and general waste;
- 3) Water – potable water needs to be accessible to become RV Friendly – who bears the cost?;
- 4) Power – should this be accessible and who pays and how is the use otherwise prevented;

- 5) Noise caused from increased traffic – will this affect the amenity of neighbouring residents?;
- 6) Competition to commercial businesses;
- 7) Risks and insurance – changes would be required to premium and coverage;
- 8) Current local laws do not allow for camping (except when linked to an event with a successful ‘hire of park/reserve’ application) – amendments would be required; and
- 9) Application – is this for RVers only or can all caravan’ers and campers use these facilities and sites. This raises the issue of being in competition with existing commercial caravan parks. On the other hand, not all commercial caravan parks can fit the very large motorhomes and RVs.

6.4 Regulatory Requirements

If Council proceeds to become an RV Friendly Shire there are a number of legislative and policy implications, as follows:

6.4.1 Moira Shire Council’s Recreation Reserves Local Law 2009

Part 3, 12.1(d) of the Recreation Reserves Local Law outlines that no camping is allowed at a recreation reserve.

Clause 9, however, states that the Section 86 Committee of Management may issue a permit for an event. There is a process for hiring of a recreation reserve that needs to be followed in order for any permit to be successfully granted. The end decision for the approval of any application for hire of the reserves lies with the relevant Section 86 Committee.

In order for Council to provide camping facilities for RVers in Council’s Recreation Reserves, Council would have to amend this local law in order to allow camping (outside of permitted event) to be allowed in recreation reserves.

6.4.2 Moira Shire Council’s Community Safety & Environment Law

Clause 2.16 of the Community Safety and Environment Law outlines that “A person must not, except with a permit, camp on any Council land, on any public land, or on any privately owned vacant land within the municipal district unless within a designated camping area.”

In order for Council to provide camping facilities for RVers on Council managed land, Council would have to amend this local law or on a case by case basis resolve to approve the erection of signage stating “free camping allowed” at the designated location(s).

6.4.3 Competitive Neutrality Policy

As per the policy, “The objective of competitive neutrality is set out in Clause 3(1) of the CPA [read Competition Principles Agreement] as ‘the elimination of resource allocation distortions arising out of the public ownership of entities engaged in significant business activities: Government business should not enjoy any net competitive advantage simply as a result of their public sector ownership.

These principles only apply to the business activities of publicly owned entities, not to the non-business, non-profit activities of these entities’.”

This means that if Council was to supply overnight camping facilities to the RV market as a significant business activity, Council would have to comply with the same regulatory environment that commercial caravan parks must comply with. This includes fire, safety and environmental regulations. Council would also be required to charge the true market value for the provision of such service and facility. The Emergency Management requirements can be particularly arduous.

Council is not proposing to engage in significant business activity through the delivery of the RV Strategy and therefore the Competitive Neutrality Policy does not strictly apply.

6.4.4 Residential Tenancies Act 1997

The regulations covering caravan parks set out the following requirements for operating a caravan park in Victoria:

- ❖ Registration with local council and associated duties on owners;
- ❖ Fees for registration;
- ❖ Standards for fire safety and emergency management planning in caravan parks;
- ❖ Construction standards and installation requirements for movable dwellings in parks; and
- ❖ Standards for services and amenities and the maintenance of sites and dwellings.

6.5 Risk Management

All Victorian councils and caravan park operators are required to protect sites users and to minimize risk to themselves, Council and the environment.

6.6 Environmental and Waste Management

With no provision of dump points, Council would face the issue of RVers disposing of their waste water (grey and black) on the side of the road.

Council will have to consider waste management for any new proposed RV sites. Council will be required to allocate funds to and/or find appropriate solutions that minimise the cost and impact to the flora, fauna and local communities. These are issues that are already being considered by Council for campers camping in the bush.

During the development of this strategy, the suitability of several sites has been assessed with the above issues and challenges in mind.

7 Discussion

Travelling the country-side in RVs has become a popular lifestyle of retirees as well as the family market. The RV market is growing in size and will continue to grow in coming years. In order for

Moira Shire Council to capitalise on this market growth and encourage any economic activity from this market, it is crucial that the current needs of the RV market are considered and appropriate facilities and services are provided.

Many RVers regularly use formal caravan parks. It is the intention by Moira Shire Council to actively support the shire's formal caravan parks by increasing the pool of RVers coming to the region; by providing a few low cost camping sites and promoting the RV market to stay longer, explore the region, visit the region's attractions and stay in formal caravan parks for at least part of their stay.

Although Moira Shire Council currently has four RV Friendly Towns, Council seeks to take a shire-wide approach. An RV Friendly Shire approach is the appropriate way forward, capturing the opportunities arising from tapping into the RV market.

Tourism business operators and businesses supporting the tourism industry can apply for the RV Friendly Destination status where the business addresses the CMCA RV Friendly Destination criteria and are subject to planning approval.

Moira Shire Council is an attractive destination for the RV market, situated in the south to north/north to south route from Melbourne. Using the appropriate communication channels and clearly promoting the approved RV facilities and services will limit inappropriate usage and address the challenges and issues currently faced by Moira Shire Council.

By taking a shire-wide approach, effective measures can be applied to ensure that the:

- ❖ Benefits of tapping into the RV market are enhanced;
- ❖ Needs of the RV market are met;
- ❖ Sites are properly maintained, protected and preserved through regulation of the sites; and
- ❖ Existing caravan park operators and other tourism operators are respected and in-directly supported.

A series of actions will transition Moira Shire from having four RV Friendly Towns to becoming an RV Friendly Shire with a range of facilities and services on offer to the RV market while enhancing the economic input.

8 Action Plan

The following actions will further enhance the profile of Moira Shire as an attractive region for RVers. Moira Shire Council will pro-actively encourage greater visitation and economic impact from the RV market by:

8.1 Endorse and Promote Moira Shire as an Attractive RV Friendly Shire

Council will position and promote Moira Shire (utilising its tourism brand) in partnership with the tourism industry as a destination that welcomes RVs and highlights the facilities and experiences encouraging visitation and increased length of stay.

Council can provide visitor information packs targeted specifically to the RV market from the visitor information centres and promote the facilities and experiences on offer through appropriate RV channels, the destination tourism website(s), Murray Regional Tourism Board and the visitor information centre network.

8.2 Establish Economic Data and Visitor Profile of RV Market

Moira Shire Council to work with community groups to develop the appropriate mechanisms to obtain economic data (i.e. visitor length of stay and expenditure), visitor profiles (i.e. visitor demographics and psychographics) and industry feedback.

This data will help validate if this strategy is the best way forward for Moira Shire Council and if any amendments are required to this RV strategy.

8.3 Transition to Commercially Managed Dump Points

A number of existing caravan parks with dump points have expressed an interest in providing this service to the RV market at a fee. There are also existing caravan parks that do not yet have a dump point, but if given the chance would be interested in providing the service to the RV market at a fee. Council should liaise with these caravans to finalise the list of commercially managed dump points available to the RV market (at a fee).

- ❖ Existing commercial dump points that could be offered at a charge:
 - Murray River Hideaway, Strathmerton (Septic Tank)
 - Oasis, Cobram – \$5 dollar user charge already in place
 - Time Out Holiday Park, Koonoomoo (currently installing)
 - Wakiti Creek, Kotupna
- ❖ Caravan parks interested in having dump point installed in order to offer their service at a charge:
 - Numurkah Caravan Park, Numurkah
 - Cobram East Caravan Park, Cobram
 - Willows, Cobram
 - Westside Creek, Yarrawonga– need more information
- ❖ There may also be service stations that could be interested in installing dump points and making these available at a nominal fee for non-patrons and free of charge for patrons.
 - Westside Petrol Station, Strathmerton

In the transition phase, existing public dump points that can be offered free of charge include

- ❖ Murray Valley Highway, Strathmerton
- ❖ Weir Street, Nathalia
- ❖ Nangunia St adjacent to the Lions Bus Shelter, Barooga – approval for promotion of this dump point has been sought from Berrigan Shire Shire.
- ❖ Purtle Park, Mulwala – approval for promotion of this dump point has been sought from Corowa Shire.

Economic data and evaluation (Section 8.2) will identify if Moira Shire Council should continue to offer a mixture of public and commercially managed dump points or fully transition to only commercially managed dump points.

8.4 Trial the Continuation of Council Managed Dump Points in Showgrounds

Council should seek to trial the continuation of the Council managed dump points in showgrounds – i.e. Cobram, Numurkah and Yarrawonga. During the trial period, free dump points will also be accessible from:

- ❖ Showgrounds, Cobram
- ❖ Showgrounds, Numurkah
- ❖ Showgrounds, Yarrawonga

A review should be taken after 12 months. The review will ascertain if Council should continue to provide free dump points at the showgrounds, keep the dump points open for events only or completely decommission the dump points.

8.5 Develop RV Friendly Low Cost Overnight Parking Sites in Smaller Towns and Surrounds

Council should in the long term seek to develop 8 locations that offer low cost overnight parking (up to 48 hours), catering for RVers travelling to the east, south, west and north of the shire. These locations should aim to increase economic activity in smaller towns thereby enhancing the economic benefit of tapping into the RV market and at the same time not be seen as in competition with our formal caravan parks.

Council will be required to register the following proposed sites with its Environmental Health Department, to follow the fire safety and emergency management standards and to abide by the given standards for services, amenities and maintenance, as outlined in section 6.4.4.1 to 6.4.4.8.

Council will be required to find a solution for how to address the issue of non-RVers using the sites once they are established, such as itinerant workers and homeless people that are not travelling in self-contained vehicles. This may be through a signage or a revision to the local law. Legal advice

may need to be sought to ensure that this will not be seen as discrimination under the Human Rights Act.

8.5.1 Tungamah

A site has been identified in Tungamah as an ideal location for low cost overnight parking. The community at Tungamah has expressed a keen interest in having the Lions Park on the Broken Creek turned into a destination catering for the RV market.

8.5.2 Yarroweyah

The recreation reserve in Yarroweyah has been identified as an ideal location for low cost overnight parking. The Recreation Reserve is currently being used by the local Footy Club, which is the only club using the facility. There is a lot of space at this site, which could be utilised by RVers for overnight parking of no more than 48 hours.

The site is on the Benalla-Tocumwal Route and near the Murray Valley Highway and would therefore capture both the north/south and east/west travel.

8.5.3 Picola

A site has been identified in Picola as an ideal location for low cost overnight parking. Although off the beaten track, it would capture RV traffic from the Barmah-Shepparton Road and Murray Valley Highway.

The location is on the East side of the Picola Train Park, but in order for this to be offered as a RV facility, a lease with VicTrack would be required. Such a lease would cost around \$250 per annum.

8.5.4 Wunghnu

A site has been identified in Wunghnu as an ideal location for low cost overnight parking.

The Recreation Reserve is managed by a Section 86 Committee. Council would have to liaise with this Section 86 Committee to ensure that they would be happy to provide this location for overnight parking of up to 48 hours.

The location in Wunghnu would capture the north/south travel along the Goulburn-Valley Highway.

8.5.5 Forges Beach

Forges Beach is managed by Parks Victoria. Parks Victoria currently supports the notion to promote Forges Beach No1 &2 to the RV market, but requires the following challenges and issues to be considered:

- ❖ **Road maintenance** - Traditionally Parks Victoria has maintained the access road to allow for 2 wheel drives to access Forges No. 1 . Nevertheless, there may be some minor constraints with the reliability of funding to maintain the access road to an acceptable standard consistently . For example, Parks Victoria's Road Maintenance budget for the entire road

network within their reserves managed out of Yarrawonga is \$7,000 for 2015/16. If there was any assistance available from the Moria Shire for road maintenance linking some of our more iconic beaches this would be of assistance.

- ❖ **Toilet infrastructure at capacity-** The promotion of the site to the RV Market would add pressure to the toilet at Forges Beach no. 1, which already is at capacity during peak times. Furthermore, Parks Victoria has experienced issues with RVers dumping waste into the existing toilets. With increased usage of chemical toilets and other systems available to campers the need for a dump disposal point located between Yarrawonga and Cobram could be an option.

8.5.6 Barmah Lakes Camping Area, Barmah National Park

This site is maintained by Parks Victoria. The Barmah Lakes Camping Area has recently been upgraded and is suitable for promotion to the RV Market.

The site offers easy access to the Barmah National Park, the Barmah Lakes, the township of Barmah, local tourism operators and a number of walking tracks. RVers need to be aware of camping under trees as River Red Gums can drop branches or fall over without warning.

8.5.7 The Killawarra Camp, Warby Ovens National Park, Killawarra

This site is maintained by Parks Victoria. The Killawarra Camp in the Warby Ovens National Park is accessed via Camp Rd, off the Boweya Road and is suitable for promotion to the RV Market. RVers need to be aware of camping under trees as River Red Gums can drop branches or fall over without warning.

8.5.8 Lower Ovens Wildlife Reserve at Bundalong

This site is maintained by Parks Victoria. Although technically in the Indigo Shire by 50m, park visitors shop in Bundalong and Yarrawonga and it would be suitable to promote to the RV market. It is located downstream of the River Bend Caravan Park at Bundalong and is recognised as one of the best sites in Northern Victoria. RVers need to be aware of camping under trees as River Red Gums can drop branches or fall over without warning.

8.6 Commit Resources to Enforcement

To ensure that the RV Strategy is successfully implemented, Council must commit the necessary resources to ensure appropriate enforcement of the duration of stay and restricting parking to designated areas and associated activities.

8.7 Encourage Local Businesses to Become CMCA RV Friendly Destinations

With the appropriate Council permits in place, local tourism and tourism support businesses could be encouraged to join the RV Friendly Destination™ scheme, if this aligns with the overarching aim and strategies of the individual business.

8.8 Provide Long-Vehicle Parking Close to Shopping Precincts

Long vehicle parking to be properly line marked or sign-posted where appropriate. Moira Shire Council will provide long-vehicle parking of up to four hours in close proximity to shopping precincts and amenities in the following locations:

- ❖ Punt Road , Cobram
- ❖ Behind Federation Park, Cobram Railway Station, Cobram
- ❖ Mivo Park, Cobram
- ❖ Blake St, Nathalia
- ❖ Weir Street, Nathalia
- ❖ Irvine Parade, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Hunt Street, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Hume Street, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Hovell Street, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Gilmore Street, Yarrawonga
- ❖ Melville Street Numurkah
- ❖ Knox Street, Numurkah
- ❖ Lions Park, Tungamah
- ❖ Barr Street, Tungamah
- ❖ Swamp Road, Lake Rowan
- ❖ Hotchin Street, Katamatite
- ❖ Off Murray Valley Highway near Goughs Lane, Bundalong
- ❖ Off Murray Valley Highway, Strathmerton
- ❖ Wunghnu, by the creek
- ❖ Moran Street, Picola

There may be further options for long vehicle parking that could be explored further, including but not limited to:

- Railway land at the end of Lott Street, Yarrawonga – this land is owned by VicTrack and not Council. In other words, this would either require VicTrack’s direct consent or the Committee of Management could apply for an extension of their lease of land near the Railway Station to allow Council to promote this location for RV parking.

8.9 Offer Access to Potable Water from Designated Locations

Moira Shire Council will offer access to potable water from the following designated locations:

- ❖ Cnr Barr Street and Tungamah Main Road, Tungamah
- ❖ Cnr Benalla - Tocumwal Road and Moore St, Katamatite
- ❖ Benalla-Tocumwal Road, Katamatite
- ❖ Blake Street, Nathalia

- ❖ Weir Street, Nathalia

Access to potable water may also potentially be provided from the same location as the commercial dump points. This will depend on the level of interest from the caravan parks to be part of such a packaged deal (i.e. dump your waste and fill up with potable water) at a minimal set fee.

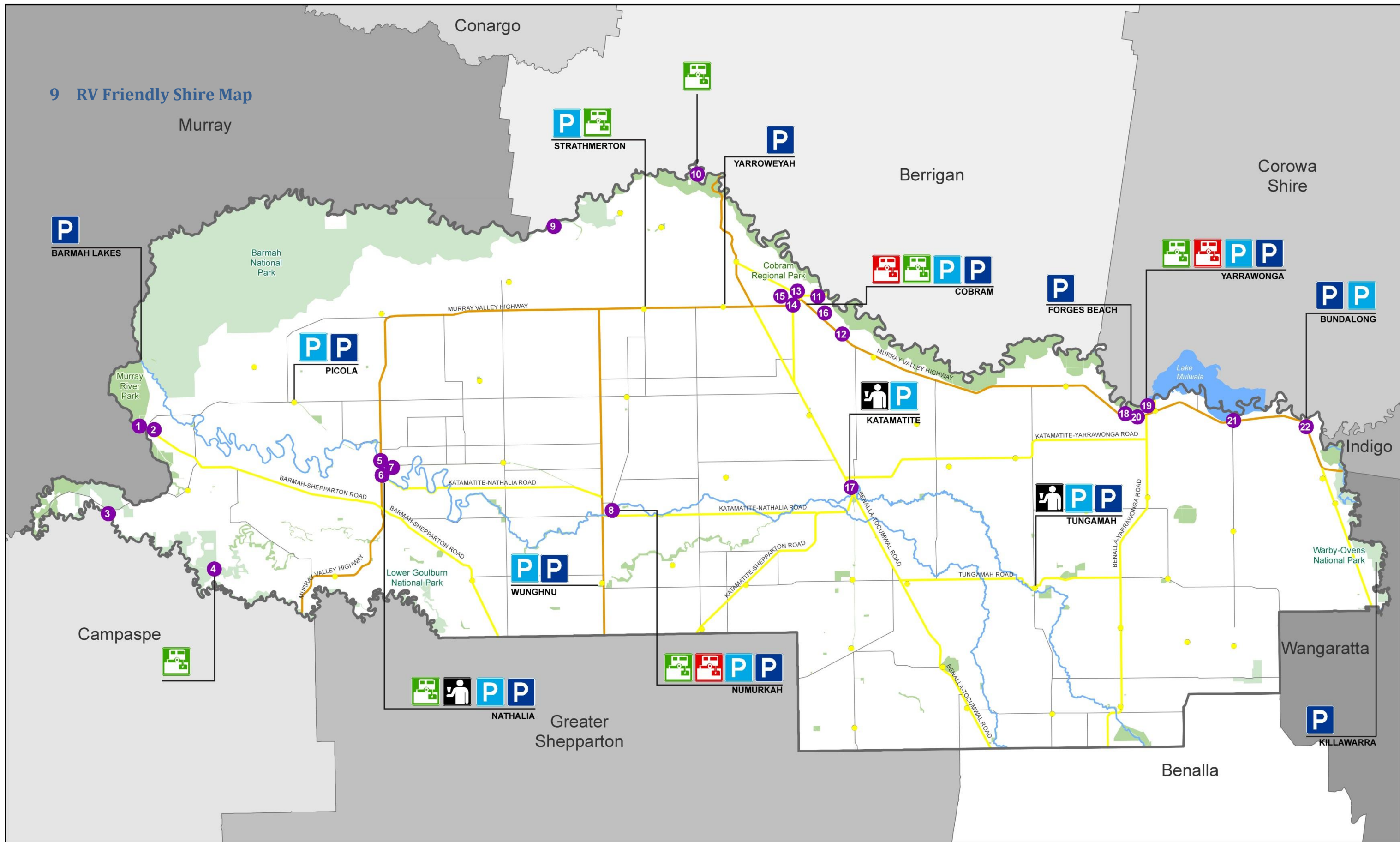
8.10 Provide New Signage

Signage will be an important component of clearly identifying the RV Facilities and Services. A signage plan is to be developed as part of the Moira Shire Signage Strategy outlining the signage requirements and locations. Signage is to include:

- ❖ Long vehicle parking signage (where appropriate);
- ❖ Overnight parking signage;
- ❖ Promotional signage of key attractions and caravan parks
- ❖ Potable water signage

The provision of signage and any potential line marking would require a budget of approximately \$10,000 - \$15,000.

9 RV Friendly Shire Map



Paper Size A3
 0 2.5 5 10
 Kilometres



Map Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Horizontal Datum: GDA 1994
 Grid: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| LONG TERM PARKING 48 HOURS | BARMAH CAMPING PTY LTD CARAVAN PARK | NATHALIA MOTEL AND HOLIDAY PARK | APEX CARAVAN PARK | RACV COBRAM RESORT | SKILAND MOTEL PTY LTD |
| SHORT TERM PARKING | MURRAY PERCH CARAVAN PARK | RIVERBANK CARAVAN PARK | COBRAM EAST CARAVAN PARK | KATAMATITE CARAVAN PARK | BUNDALONG HOLIDAY PARK |
| POTABLE WATER | RIVER BEND CARAVAN PARK | NUMURKAH CARAVAN PARK | COBRAM OASIS TOURIST PARK | JELARA CARAVAN PARK | |
| RV DUMP POINT | WAKITI CREEK RESORT | MURRAY RIVER HIWAY HOLIDAY PARK | COBRAM WILLOWS CARAVAN PARK | YARRAWONGA HOLIDAY PARK | |
| POTENTIAL RV DUMP POINT | COACH CARAVAN PARK | TIME OUT HOLIDAY PARK | GREEN PALMS CARAVAN PARK | YARRAWONGA WESTSIDE CARAVAN PARK | |

